

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01541 061315Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSM-03 IO-13 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 TRSE-00 AID-05 OMB-01 ACDA-07 DHA-02
NEAE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /081 W
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O R 061227Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3565
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1541

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINS, MILI, LE, IS, SY
SUBJECT: WILL SYRA PREVENT A CORDON SANITAIRE?

REF: BEIRUT 1514

1. SUMMARY: SITUATION IN MARJAYUN-TAIBEH AREA STILL FLUID,
AND, AS OF EARLY APRIL 6, NEITHER SIDE SEEMS TO BE AHEAD.
FURTHER INDICATIONS OF SYRIAN TILT IN SUPPORT FWCDPDFPDE#IN NABATIYAH

.
THERE IS AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT OF PHALANGE MILITIA MOBILIZATION.
SYRIA MAY HAVE DECIDED TO ATTEMPT TO PREVENT CONSOLIDATION OF
THE "CORDON SANITAIRE."

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2. FLUID SITUATION IN SOUTH. REPORTS FROM THE BATTLE
ZONE IN THE SOUTH SUGGEST THAT FIGHTING STILL GOES ON,
PARTICULARLY AROUND KAIBEH. CHRISTIAN CLAIMS APRIL 5
(REFTEL) THAT THEY HAD RETAKEN TAIBEH ARE REFUTED BY OTHER
SOURCES, WHICH INDICATE THAT ELEMENTS OF BOTH FATAH AND
THE PFLP ARE STILL IN TAIBEH. MINISTER OF DEFENSE THIS
MORNING (APRIL 6) CONFIRMED TO AMBASSADOR THAT LCF HAD

NOT RPT NOT RETAKEN TOWN AS ALLEGED YESTERDAY.

3. SYRIAN TILT TOWARDS FATAH. REPORTED SYRIAN DIRECT ARTILLERY SUPPORT OF FATAH AGAINST CHRISTIANS IN TAIBEH AND MARJAYUN AREA (REFTEL) NOW APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED VIA SAIQA UNITS, NOT SYRIAN REGULARS. THERE ARE OTHER SIGNS, HOWEVER, THAT SYRIANS ARE INCREASING THEIR SUPPORT OF FATAH:

A. YARMUK BRIGADE. IRANIAN AMBASSADOR INFORMED AMBASSADOR THAT PRESENCE SYRIAN-CONTROLLED YARMUK BRIGADE OF PLA (AS WELL AS ELEMENTS OF THE LAA AND SHIA AMAL MILITIA FROM THE UPPER BEKAA) NOW IN NABATIYAH IS CONFIRMED. WE HAVE SUPPORTING INFO AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE ALSO CONFIRMS.
(WE CONFUSED BY DAMASCUS 2208 PARA 5. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT YARMUK BRIGADE IS PART OF PLA, NOT FATAH, AND THAT IT WAS SUBSTANTIALLY WITHDRAWN FROM LEBANON IN DECEMBER 1976.)

B. SYRIANS TO DELAY IMPLEMENTING CAIRO ACCORDS?
BEIRUT'S L'ORIENT-LE JOUR APRIL 4 QUOTED ARTICLE IN DAMASCUS AL-BAATH OF APRIL 3 AS FOLLOWS: "IF ONE CONSIDERS THE TEXT OF THE (1969 CAIRO) ACCORDS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY... IS THE ONLY PARTY AUTHORIZED TO IMPLEMENT THE CAIRO ACCORDS, IN COOPERATION WITH THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE." AL-BAATH IS FURTHER QUOTED AS SAYING THAT THE APPOINTMENT OF A NEW LEBANESE ARMY COMMANDER IS THE "FIRST STEP LEADING TO SOLUTION OF BOTH THE QUESTION OF SOUTH LEBANON AND THE APPLICATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS." L'ORIENT
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APRIL 6 REPORTS AL-BAATH APRIL 5 HAS CORRECTED THIS POSITION SLIGHTLY, BY SAYING THAT THE RECONSTITUTION OF THE LEBANOESE ARMY AND APPLICATION OF THE CAIRO ACCORDS SHOULD PROCEED SIMULTANEOUSLY.

4. CHRISTIAN REACTION TO NEW SYRIAN POSITION. WE DO NOT YET KNOW IF KFUR FRONT FULLY REALIZES SHIFT IN SYRIAN STRATEGY IN THE SOUTH, OR WHAT ITS REACTION MIGHT BE. ONE SOURCE REPORTS THAT PHALANGE PARTY IS REACTIVATING MILITIA UNITS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN OPERATIONAL LATELY, AND MAY SEEK A WAY TO SEND THEM SOUTH; BUT A PHALANGE SOURCE EARLY APRIL 6 DENIES ANY UNUSUAL PHALANGE ACTIVITY.

5. COMMENT: IF EARLY INDICATIONS OF SYRIAN SUPPORT OF FATAH'S STRONG RESISTANCE TO THE CHRISTIAN OFFENSIVE IN TAIBE AREA BEGUN LAST WEEK ARE CONFIRMED BY FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT SYRIA HAS DECIDED TO TAKE NECESSARY STEPS TO PREVENT COMPLETION OF THE ISRAELI-CHRISTIAN CORDON SANITAIRE, DESPITE ITS QUIESCENT ATTITUDE

OVER RECENT MONTHS AS THE CHRISTIANS TOOK THE FIRST MAJOR STEPS TO ESTABLISH THE "CORDON." THIS WILL PROFOUNDLY DISTURB THE DE FACTO SYRIAN-CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE, AND COULD LEAD TO RUPTURE OF ALREADY TENSE RELATIONS, EVEN OVERT HOSTILITIES, BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN HARD-LINE RIGHT WING LED BY CHAMOUN AND SYRIA. CHAMOUNIST MAY SEEK INCREASED ISRAELI INVOLVEMENT IN THE SOUTH TO SAVE THEIR POSITION.
PARKER

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED

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